



Aruba “dodges the bullet” of Hurricane Felix

Aruba prepared for Tropical Storm Felix over the weekend, which was upgraded to Hurricane Felix, a force two storm, late on Saturday evening. The disturbance passed just north of the island and began dumping rain on Aruba at about 7:00 AM with a light drizzle that became a downpour at around 9:00 AM lasting nearly two hours. This created widespread flooding in areas around the Eagle supermarkets and Madaki, which receive the runoff from higher elevations.

Aruba shores were subject to very high seas and rough waves beginning on Saturday, which continued throughout Sunday. After passing west and moving slightly north of the island, Felix gained more strength. NOAA upgraded the storm to a force five hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson scale at 8:00 P.M. on Sunday evening, with sustained winds exceeding 165 miles per hour and some gusts even stronger. Before reaching Aruba, the storm had done considerable damage in Granada, Barbados, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, continuing to build in strength and speed as it approached the ABC islands. It passed north of Aruba at latitude of 13.2 degrees.

When declared a force five hurricane, the center of Felix was located near latitude 13.8 north and longitude 72.9 west or about 390 miles (625 km) southeast of Kingston, Jamaica. As of 5:00 AM EDT this morning the center of Hurricane Felix was located near latitude 14.1 north and longitude 75.9 west or about 275 miles (445 km) south-southeast of Kingston Jamaica and about 490 miles (790 km) east of Cabo Gracias a Dios on the Nicaragua/Honduras border. A tropical storm watch has been issued for Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. Hurricane watches and warnings were issued for Honduras as possibly catastrophic damage is predicted. Last night, the Honduras government issued a hurricane warning from Limon, eastward to the Honduras/Nicaragua border, and a hurricane watch westward of Limon to the Honduras/Guatemala border. It is traveling at a rate of 21 miles per hour, and expected to remain a force four or five storm before making landfall.

“We definitely “dodged a bullet” expressed one Aruban resident that had closely followed the storm reports. Aruban agencies, particularly the Center for Disaster Control headed by Bibi Arendsz, deserve kudos for their coordinated efforts and state of readiness. Since before the beginning of the storm season they have been informing the public towards storm awareness and preparation, and though Felix did not hit Aruba as hard as it could have, in the case of hurricanes and tropical storms, it is always “better to be safe than sorry.”